

**** THE ROMPA RECORDER****

***** Editor - Clay Iles *****

***** April 2024 *****

The rain may have almost washed-out winter tennis. And The Rompa Recorder? ... So little to record.

The genial image of winter tennis – you know, making the best of it, treble layers, woollen hats, scarves, gloves, hand warmers, chilly but bright - was thwarted for five months this winter by incessant rain and cold.

Apart from, that is, **CLUB SESSIONS**, the inter club matches that struggled on and of course Johnny's popular Friday evening group, and under floodlights. What an innovation Johnny's group has become. The old truism good players won't play with weaker players, weaker players won't play with beginners, has been wiped out. In one stroke patient, enthusiastic, encouraging Johnny, has banished all that. Everybody plays with everybody, otherwise you can't come. The session is at 5 p.m. on Fridays. Those interested in taking part should contact **Johnny 07946 036077**.

One blessing this winter was a brand-new clubhouse. More room, brighter social area, better, modern changing rooms, larger, updated kitchen, welcoming.

Thank you Garf, Hazel, Brian and others for putting in so much thought and effort.

Transformed during the horrendous bout of weather – how did the workers do it? It's a wonder this extension to the club house ever rose

from its foundations. Well done Reid & Co for putting in (and up) such excellent work.

The new pavilion's maiden gathering mid-March consisted of about 14 members for the **Annual General Meeting**, superbly presided over by our chair Hazel.

There were a number of apologies from some of those not attending. A pity more weren't there because under discussion was a topic affecting everyone playing tennis at Meads – **tennis court surfaces**.

The Rompa Recorder won't go into details here. They have already been set out by Bernard in his pre-AGM report to all members. Bernard offered a comprehensive study of what's on offer, with the differing costs.

Just to say that the top two courts, 1 and 2, are in worse condition than the others, 3 and 4, and are approaching the end of their lifespan. On these upper courts, once the rain hits them in the autumn they don't dry out for the rest of the winter. The ball whizzes off the surface at increasing speeds testing mature eyes and reflexes and wrecking tennis balls. With what surface should we replace them? Similar to what we have now or something different? One possibility is to go for the same surface as courts 3 and 4, artificial grass. These are not exactly the same as 1 and 2, but very similar. Other ideas are artificial clay or poraflex.

Very old hands at tennis, of which I count myself, will remember years ago how one surface ruled the tennis courts throughout the UK – Shale, otherwise known as En Tout Cas. The problem with shale was that we tried to kid ourselves it was the same surface that dominated tennis throughout Europe – clay.

It wasn't.

For various reasons, one of which was our rainfall, shale was as close as we could get in this country to clay. All the major championships in Europe: The French, The Italian, The German, The Spanish, were played on clay, as were loads of subsidiary tournaments.

Out of clay rose the great clay court specialists – the Spaniards Santana, Nadal, the incomparable Swede Bjorn Borg; in the 1920s the French musketeers Cochet, Lacoste. Then later, the Frenchman Pietrangeli, Australian Ken Rosewall, the Czech Jaroslav Drobny and of course Ivan Lendl, the Argentinian Guillermo Vilas, Mats Wilander, Gustavo Kuerten, Novak Djokovic,

And the ladies: Lenglen, Helen Wills Moody, Maureen Connolly, Margaret Court, Chris Evert, Steffie Graf, Justine Henin, Margaret Court, Sanchez Vicario, Monica Seles, Serena Williams, Iga Swiatek.

I could go on. Clay was *the* tennis surface in Europe, excluding Britain where the annual spring cry, 'grass courts will soon be in,' summed up our passion for green swards.

Clay has 2 advantages. It is slow, thereby creating longer rallies and supposedly more fun, offering opportunity for artistry and imagination. You learn to slide into your shots. Try to slide on shale and you were likely to end flat on your back with many cuts and bruises to prove it. One possible downside to clay is the need to drag or briefly sweep the surface after every bout of play. Club players abroad are quite used to doing that. They've been brought up ending their games with a four or five minute brush over the surface. Whether Meads members, not having experienced that chore, would happily do it is another matter. Apart from artificial clay the other court possibilities for 1 and 2 are continuing with artificial grass, which we have on 3 and 4 - or poraflex.

I've focused on the glories of clay and I've played on artificial grass at Meads but never on the other contender poraflex. Another possibility discussed at the meeting was having a combination of 2 courts with one surface, 2 with another.

Members anxious about our court surface should try playing on artificial clay and poraflex. Please speak to **Bernard 07775 907668** as he says he can arrange court testing sessions.

Wet courts, whizzing balls and the difficulty of seeing in the morning from one end when the winter sun does put in an appearance could be solved in one strike. At the end of the meeting, Hazel, not unexcited you could tell, mentioned the possibility of a balloon. You know, a temporary covering going up each winter over 2 courts. Problems solved.

Apart from the dilemma of which surface!

New Secretary

Thank you, Kevin and Sue Boakes, for putting in all those hours required of the club secretary. So often your labours have been behind the scenes, vital nevertheless.

Many thanks to Anne Backshell, who is now taking over this role, pictured here with Felicity Gisby at the recent Open Day.



The Rompa Recorder Interview

Each edition I chat to a club member. This time I'm delighted to speak to:

Sue Francis

1. When, where and why did you start playing tennis?

I come from a very sporty family. My father was an accomplished squash player and cricketer and both my brothers played ball sports to a high standard. So I had to play sport too! I joined Devonshire Park as a child, played tennis there and enjoyed entering tournaments in the holidays. I also played hockey, netball and rounders, which I loved as well. I'm saddened that now schools hardly play rounders.

2. For how long have you been a member at Meads and when did you serve on the committee?

We have been members since the very beginning! Some local people were asked to chip in £5 to help start the club. My mother thought it would be a great facility for Meads so happily paid. I remember the caravan that served as our pavilion on the grass by the top courts. Both my husband Mark and I have served on the committee together at different times over the years. First when Leslie Wilson was Chairman and later with Ron Herbert and then with Linda Saunt. We organised all the Rompa Fetes



every July which were a highlight of the summer. People would be queuing down the road to get in! Back then the fetes raised a lot of money for the club. We also organised dinner dances, the highlight of which was when we managed to persuade the Pasadena Roof Orchestra to play.

3. I believe you ran a children's group at the club.

Sue Kemp (Leslie Wilson's) daughter and I ran Rompa Tots every Friday morning. It was very well attended by a lot of local mums and babies and toddlers. We ran all kinds of activities from painting to music and singing. My children literally grew up at Rompa. At weekends we would take part in the club sessions and the children would play on the field, as there were no grass courts then.

4. Where did you go to school and did you play tennis there?

I did the rounds of Eastbourne schools. I was one of the first pupils at Bede's but left as there were so few girls! I then went to Beresford House for 2 years which I didn't love and then on to Moira House. After that a lot of Eastbourne girls travelled by train to the Convent of our Lady in St. Leonards. I was there from 11 to 16. My father died suddenly in the summer holidays. To keep me extra busy my mother then sent me to Eastbourne College 6th form. There I met Mark. I really enjoyed tennis and was lucky to play in my school teams.

5. Do your children play?

My 3 children all play tennis. They had coaching from an early age at Rompa. Charlotte played for her school teams. Will is more of a cricket and hockey player although he enjoys tennis. Jamie is the one who regularly plays at Meads and is part of the men's 1st team.

6. Apart from tennis what else interests you?

I love going to musicals. I also really enjoy travel and days out, whether going to London or around here. But my family always come first. Having 2 little grandsons aged 2 and 4 is such fun. Even though they live in London we see a lot of them.

7. What career path have you chosen?

I have always been a primary school teacher. My first job was Bede's Pre-Prep. Between children I did supply work at various schools. Since 2006 I have worked at St Andrews Prep and currently work in the Learning Support Department, which I love. I have been very lucky to have a job that has always fitted in with family life.

8. Have any tennis players inspired you over the years?

The players who inspired me were those playing when I was a teenager. I loved watching Chris Evert, who was so cool and calm. Nastase always entertained, like him or loathe him. Watching British tennis improve over the years has been a highlight too. Today the player I most admire is Ons Jabeur. She has been a pioneer for tennis in Muslim countries. She sets a great example and I think she is a genuinely good person.

9. Do you have any favourite writers and /or musicians, composers, artists. And why?

I am a massive Abba fan. Their music is so uplifting. We have been lucky enough to go to the London Mamma Mia dress rehearsals many times as my oldest friend's husband is the company manager. I also enjoy psychological or crime novels. I studied Psychology and PE for my teaching degree and really enjoy analysing character as I read.

10. Which well-known people would you ask to a dinner party?

Definitely my friend Philip, who runs Mama Mia, works with Judy Craymer and is always full of interesting gossip. 2. Michael Macintyre as I love his humour. 3. Claudia Winkelman to tell us the secrets of traitors 4. Piers Morgan who would provoke argument and discussion 5. My son Will, who would enjoy the argument and would probably win. 6. The rest of my family.

11. Can you tell us anything about yourself that would surprise members?

I have a phobia of heights. When I was persuaded by the rest of the family to go on The London Eye I didn't want to disappoint them. I manned up, got on, then found myself frozen to the seat in the middle. I couldn't move from it and spent most of the trip sobbing. Needless to say, they don't try to make me do heights any more.

Fantastic! Thank you very much Sue for giving your time and interesting, fun, answers.

Official Opening of the new Pavilion.



On Sunday 12th May 12.30 p.m Gerry Armstrong will officially open our new pavilion. Last summer he retired from refereeing the Wimbledon Championships. Gerry is an honorary member of the club.

Pictured – Garf keeping an eye on progress with the new pavilion.

Club Championships

A major feature of the club calendar. To enter, please sign up on tournament entry sheets in the pavilion. Choose from singles, doubles and veterans. You can enter 3 events. But be quick. Entries close 10th May.



The Championships Finals Day

is **Saturday 7th September**. Or in case of bad weather the 8th September.

Referee – **Luciano**

Important! Before entering the tournament make certain you are available to play on finals day. There can be no exceptions to this. Even if you think you've no chance of reaching a final. There may be a small entry in an event or people have pulled out. Your form may be incredible and suddenly you're in the final. You never know.

Open Day - April 13th



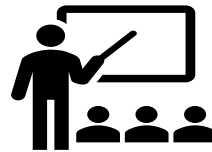
Sorry to go on about the weather, but how fortunate that what seemed the first day of summer should coincide with the club's Open Day. Open Days are planned so that those interested in joining are able to see the club at its most attractive and convivial i.e club afternoons.

Saturday 13th April did not disappoint. A warm welcome by those greeting visitors to the club resulted in 8 new memberships, with one or two still considering, all signed up there and then. Approx. 28 non-members visited the club, some from just passing by, observing over the wall, wondering why so many people seemed to be having such a good time. Food had been laid out in spectacular fashion by Cassie, and helpers. Much of the spread, cakes and enticing nibbles, was prepared by members.

Various members of the committee, in particular, Hazel, vice chairman Garf, club treasurer Colin and Welfare Officer Clare, who also manned a table offering rackets and tennis items for sale, social secretary Cassie and new club secretary Anne made themselves available to show people around and to answer the many questions. 'When does the club open?'

‘When does it close?’ ‘Can you play whenever you want?’ ‘Is there coaching?’ ‘Is the club open during the winter?’ ‘Where are the grass courts?’ ‘Can beginners join?’

Just in case we’d forgotten, it did all of us good to hear the advantages of membership spelled out through questions.



Clay's Coaching Corner

More power needed on your forehand? Try to grip the throat of the racket with the other hand, the one not holding the handle, as you take the racket back. This rotates the body, giving more force as you turn back to hit the ball. But are you sure you need more force? Remember, the majority of matches are won by the player making the fewest errors, not hitting the most winners.

Juniors

The club runs Saturday morning coaching sessions for juniors 5-16 yrs old. Cost for 6 weeks is £45. **One free group of 6 weeks for every participant is now available.**

The coach is Olly McCay-Brown.

Contact Luciano, cestari.luciano@gmail.com or tel.07538 656905 for more details.

2 Generation Tournament – Monday 6th May.

Open to doubles pairs where one of a partnership is under 16.

Junior Tournament – 20th July. Referee Luciano Open to juniors under 16 yrs. Members and non-members.

Grass Courts open Friday 17th May. 2 courts. After the Rothesay tournament 3 courts until the grass courts close 8th September. Come and watch the pros practising on our grass courts during the few days leading to the Rothesay International Tennis Tournament 22 – 29 June. Past years have seen one of the greats, former Wimbledon champion, Serena Williams practising at Meads.



TEAMS REPORT

As we move into the summer campaign for our teams the club can look back on a very satisfactory Winter Season. By a strange coincidence all three of our teams (2 x ladies, 1 x men) finished third in their divisions. The ladies' firsts came agonisingly close to getting promotion from Division 4 finishing on the same number of points as second placed Cross in Hand who went up having secured a larger number of games. The ladies' seconds also had a successful season with four excellent victories on their

way to third place in Division 5. The men in Division 7 finished in a very respectable third place with three wins and two losses.

The summer season has, at the time of writing, just begun and has featured an unusual fixture with our men's firsts playing against our second team as they are both in Division 11. In difficult conditions the firsts triumphed 4-0 but were made to work hard for the victory.



The quality of the first team squad suggests that their stay in Division 11 will be brief. The ladies' firsts have also got off to a splendid start winning their first match 4-0. The seconds and thirds are starting their campaigns in May.

Anyone new to the club interested in playing competitive team tennis is very welcome to contact the team captains.

L1 Lucy Parkin; L2 Wendy Lambert; L3 Maria Louka

M1 and M2 Bernard Lien-Lambert

Pictured – the men of the mighty ones and twos before the match.

Stoolball

Sarah King-Spooner runs the Meads stoolball team.

The home ground is New Field, that large area behind the club, owned by Eastbourne College. Sarah is keen to have her team linked to Rompa. Members interested in playing should contact Sarah 07866 257319. Home matches are played on Monday evenings.

Tennis Secretary

After Peter's sterling work the position is still **vacant**. If you are interested in taking on the role, please contact Hazel 07910 135078

Charity Swim

Carol Robson is swimming 6km during May to raise funds for the Motor Neurone Disease charity. Please consider donating to support Carol and this very worthy charity. You can do so via Facebook on Caroline Morley Robson's page or please feel free to message Carol to find out more. There are also sponsorship forms in the pavilion.

Obituary - David Stannard, long time member of Meads, has very sadly passed away. He twice won the men's doubles champs at Meads.

If you would like to contribute to the next edition of the ROMPA RECORDER please contact Clay Iles – clay.iles1@hotmail.com.

Thank you, Mike, for formatting, distribution and photography.